

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

ה'תשע"ד

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May 2014

Iyar 5774

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting
🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 2

15 & 17 May – 17 Iyar

🕒 Bechukosai
🕒 5:11 – 🕒 6:05

23 & 24 May – 24 Iyar

🕒 Bamidbar
🕒 5:09 – 🕒 6:03

30 & 31 May – 2 Sivan

🕒 Naso
🕒 5:06 – 🕒 6:01

6 & 7 June – 9 Sivan

🕒 Beha'alotcha
🕒 5:05 – 🕒 6:01

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Yet another month has flown by. It's been quite nice, if not just a little disruptive, with Pesach and all the public holidays.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lily Sandler for her years of service to Oxford Shul. Lily has been at Oxford for 25 years and was an integral part of the running of the Shul. We will miss Lily as she goes on retirement and we wish her and Maish Shalom Aleichem and everything of the best.

In Lily's place we are very pleased and excited to welcome Belinda Abramson to the Oxford family. We wish her every success in her new position and hope she has a long and happy stay with us at Oxford.

The office is now only open in the mornings. We did this for logistical reasons, however, should you still need to get hold of the Shul in the afternoon you can still phone through to the office where your messages will be received. In the case of an emergency you can also contact the Rabbi or myself. My number is 082-331-3867 and the Rabbi's is 083-794-1178.

As mentioned in the newsletter last month we held a combined Friday night supper before Pesach with West Street Shul. It was a very nice evening with around 120 people attending. Rabbi Kacev delivered an address and all in all a lovely evening was had.

Shavuot is coming up and we will once again be holding our annual Shavuot evening. We may be combining this function with West Street Shul as well, but nothing is finalised as yet. We will keep you posted.

It's voting time as well. Every Shabbat morning we recite a prayer for the country and the government. Let's hope the new government will heed and be receptive to our prayers.

Regards

Brian

RABBI'S MESSAGE

ELECTIONS, ELECTIONS...

Just a few days ago, South Africans went to the polls. Unfortunately this excluded me. I have lived here for nearly thirty years but as a Permanent Resident, not an SA-citizen, and I am thus not entitled to this privilege. Nonetheless I could not escape election fever, with a polling station across the road from me at the Saxonwold Primary School, and was able to watch all the action.

It seems polling stations follow me. Three elections ago, in 1999, the IEC erected a marquee for this purpose, on an empty field directly across the road from our then Cape Town residence. At that time I was teaching at the Jewish Primary School in Constantia, Herzlia. I recall the principal asking the children at an assembly a few days before the big day, "Do you all know what we are voting for?" "For Mr Mbeki to become president," replied a little six-year-old in all candour.

Elections are an important process, even if the outcome can easily be predicted in advance. They are all about accountability, giving citizens in democracies the opportunity to assess how well their chosen ones have fulfilled previous electoral pledges. This election,

everyone knew that the African National Congress would once again return to power. Nonetheless we watched the results with great interest, to find out what message the electorate was sending the ruling party and whether it would continue to rule with as significant a majority as in 2009.

In just a few weeks, an election of a different sort is taking place. On 6th Sivan in the year 2448 (from Creation) Hashem elected the Jews to be "a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation." The Midrash recalls the electioneering which took place prior to the big day. Angels were sent out to canvass the Nations of the World and to recommend the worthiest candidate for this position. It was the Children of Israel, with their solemn pledge of "naaseh venishma" ("We shall do and we shall listen") who won the campaign and became G-d's chosen people.

No five-year term for us, however. Shavuot, celebrated on the 6th of Sivan, comes around every year (this year on Wednesday, 4th June). We relive the Giving of the Torah and gather in Shul to hear the reading of the Asseret Hadibrot (Ten Commandments). Hashem renews His covenant with us as we renew our promises to Him. Let us not forget our campaign pledges.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
30/05 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	
03/06 & 04/06 (Shavuot): 9:00	

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	5:15
Friday	5:20
Shabbat	5:00

FROM THE REBBETZIN

In the first class of my Special Education course, during my teacher training days, the Professor introduced himself and then asked that all of us in the room with learning disabilities identify ourselves. 60 students looked at the floor, the roof, out the window... as he continued insisting and even threatened that he would identify us if we did not come forward. After a prolonged few minutes, he began pointing out people. Each "victim" squirmed in her seat, trying to figure out what he knew.

Eventually he explained that each person wearing glasses in fact has a learning disability. The glasses are the tool to fix it. He asserted that every learning disability can somehow be remedied.

Glasses come in lots of different styles, colours and designs. What suits one person may not suit another; what appeals to one person may not appeal to someone else; in fact, what helps one person to see may blur another's vision.

All of us have been instructed by HaShem to keep his Torah and Mitzvot. Most of us have some "learning disabilities" in our observance. Our job is to find the correct pair of glasses that suits us and helps us to see clearly. Interestingly, some people look even better with a nice pair of glasses.

Rivky

P.S. Love my new glasses; still working on my observance.

DVAR TORAH

No Matter What, I Love You
Parents – and G-d – love their children unconditionally, no matter what they do.

*By Rea Bochner
(aish.com)*

When I was young, I would occasionally ask my mother, "Would you still love me if...", filling in the blank with some outlandish situation that would probably never happen, like accidentally burning down the house with a renegade stick of incense.

Her response was always the same: "No matter what, I will always love you".

As a teenager, I tested my mother's love with a stream of sharp retorts, a bad attitude and dozens of calls home from the principal about my skipping school. Mostly, Mom was the face of equanimity, assuring me that I was hurting no one but myself by the choices I was making. But once in a while, if I rolled my eyes just right and shot some rude remark at her, her calm reserve would crack. "Rea," she'd say, "I love you, but I *really* don't like you right now."

At the time, all I heard was that that she didn't like me anymore (Could you blame her?) which gave me enough fuel to collapse on my bed in tears of self-pity. But looking back, I realize what she was really saying to me: *I may not like your behaviour, your choices, and I may not even like you – but no matter what, I love you.*

I didn't get this until I became a parent myself. Before I had my children, most of my relationships were built on the following dynamic: *Do what I want, and*

I want you around. Don't do what I want, and I'm out. When my sons were born, however, I understood that real love doesn't work that way. My younger son, for example, gives me a run for my money, even though he's just barely two. If he can't be found throwing handfuls of Rice Krispies across the dining room, smacking his brother or kicking me when I'm trying to change his diaper, he's probably running across the parking lot of my building while the rest of us are trying to pile into the car. Sometimes, I want to sell him on Craigslist. But even though he makes me crazy, never for one second do I stop loving him.

Parenting is one of the most intense ways we can emulate G-d. True, we can practice loving kindness to our neighbors and friends, but our children came from us, just as we came from G-d. Even parents of children who are adopted partake of the creation process by raising them and helping to shape their characters. But this doesn't mean it's easy work; it's probably the toughest work we do. From unceasing demands of toddlers, to teenagers dealing with the unpredictable highs and lows, to stepping back and letting our grown children (But they're still babies!) go out on their own and make choices that may not align with what we think is best for them.

But no matter what our children do, our love for them is ever-present and unchanging, just like G-d's love for us.

We will be celebrating the holiday of Shavuot,

commemorating G-d's giving the Torah to the Jewish people. The giving of the Torah is more than just a transmission of a blueprint for living; it's G-d's guarantee that we are bound to Him forever, that He will always be there to love us, to care for us, to guide us. We are His children, even when we may not be as likeable as we could be.

History has proven that we Jews have missed the mark over and over again. We gossip. We judge. We hurt each other. We eat too much, spend too much, don't give as much as we take. But the gift of the Torah included the promise that even if we fall off the beam, G-d will always be there to catch us.

That's why we, as a nation, are still here, and we're thriving. No matter how far away we may drift, He is always there, waiting for us to come back. *No matter what, I love you.*

The same goes for our children. The ones who know they always have a safe place to come home to, where arms are open to them no matter what, are the ones with the foundation on which they can build a meaningful life.

I will try to remember this when I eat my cheesecake on Shavuot, and when my baby draws all over his belly in magic marker. I may not always like what my children do, and that's okay. I'm not required to like my kids all the time. My job as their mother is to just make sure they always know, *No matter what, I love you.*

Just like G-d loves us.

INK & STONE

By Yanky Tauber
(www.chabad.org)

The Torah comes in two forms: written and engraved.

On the last day of his life, Moses inscribed the Torah on parchment scrolls. But this written Torah was preceded by an engraved Torah: forty years earlier, at Mount Sinai, the Divine law was given to us in the form of Ten Commandments etched by the hand of G-d in two tablets of stone.

When something is written, the substance of the letters that express it--the ink--remains a separate entity from the substance upon which they have been set--the parchment. On the other hand, letters engraved in stone are forged in it: the words are stone and the stone is words.

By the same token, there is an aspect of Torah that is "inked" on our soul: we understand it, our emotions are roused by it; it becomes our "lifestyle" or even our "personality"; but it remains something additional to ourselves. Yet there is a dimension of Torah that is engraved in our being. There is a dimension of Torah which expresses a bond with G-d that is of the very essence of the Jewish soul.



MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Mendel & Tzippy Chaikin and Rabbi & Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a daughter and granddaughter
- Hymie & Denise Levin on the birth of a grandson

BAR/BATMITZVAH

- David and Rolene Milne on the Barmitzvah of their son, Gabriel on 26th April
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the Barmitzvah of their grandson, Aharon Zev Moshel in Melbourne on 17th May

ENGAGEMENT

- Naomi Schmidt on the engagement of her grandson, Peter Dreyer to Samantha Bedol in the USA

BIRTHDAYS

- Hadassah Kobrin on her 92nd birthday on 7th May
- Walter Goldblatt on his 70th birthday on 9th May
- Adrian Gore on his 50th birthday on 16th May

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:

- Dawn Nates
- Freda Bloch
- Gertie Feinstein

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Alan Zev on the death of his father, Morris
- Molly Chemel on the death of her husband, Charles
- Donald Gordon on the death of his wife, Peggy

May Hashem comfort them and their families among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and grant them long life.



**SHAVUOT IS ON WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE
AND THURSDAY 5 JUNE**

TEN COMMANDMENTS WILL BE READ ON
WEDNESDAY MORNING

YIZKOR IS ON THURSDAY MORNING

COMMUNAL YOM TOV DINNER ON TUESDAY EVENING 3RD JUNE

The Dinner will be followed by a Tikkun Leil Shavuot Study Programme
An evening not to be missed!